



BISHOP'S HOUSE
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THE PARK
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1 November 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a local MP serving peoples of faith within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham, which covers most of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Rutland, I ask you to question the government's draft legislation which will come before Parliament on Monday 2 November, in particular the cessation once again of public communal worship.

All faith communities have played a vital role, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, in sustaining personal, spiritual and mental health, and in encouraging vital charitable activities which support hundreds of thousands of people in all sections of the community, especially the most vulnerable. That critical service towards the common good of all is certainly true of the Catholic Community, and it is created and sustained by communal worship and prayer. The point must also be made that, since churches have been able to reopen for essential communal worship, great care with regard to social distancing and hygiene requirements has been taken. Our parish communities have worked hard to make our churches safe places in which people have been able to gather in restricted but well supervised ways.

It is, therefore, deeply frustrating to the Catholic Community in your constituency that the government is once again requiring the cessation of public communal worship. Whilst I understand the many difficult decisions facing the government, I have yet to see any evidence that would make the banning of communal worship, with all its human costs, a productive part of combatting the virus. Please ask the government to produce the evidence that justifies the cessation of acts of public worship; for it not to do so risks eroding the unity needed as our country enters a most difficult period of time.

With appreciation of the service you offer the community as an MP,

Rt Rev Patrick McKinney

Bishop of Nottingham